

## REFRACTIONS/REFLECTIONS

LIGHT AND TRUTH! What infinite revelations they present to man!

As an infant, man opens his eyes to light and stretches out his hand to test its substance. In the same way, artists and scientists reach out to analyze this experience. Each new generation finds more sophisticated means of grasping the qualities and forms of light and is drawn more deeply into its mystery.

For more than a century, both in the scientific researches since Helmholtz and in the arts since the Impressionist painters, the analysis of light has been pursued with increased energy. In recent years, especially in the 1960s, this zealous search has stimulated many new forms of expression in the arts. There are today reflective and fluorescent colors, electronic light sensors, kinesthetic lights in motion, and even stroboscopic lights to stop motion. The translucent and transparent effects of light are familiar to all since they are found in the colors of the sky and in the reflected images in mirrors. It is the purpose of this exhibition to pause and to reflect on these two luminous concepts — LIGHT and TRUTH — in the works of four artists of the immediate present: Seena Donneson, Dorothy Gillespie, Phyllis Mark, and Ronnie Reder.

The 20th century has provided society with invaluable, new technological means, especially in the production of large sheets of reinforced glass, mirrors, and new chemical materials loosely classified as plastics. Artists have found that these new industrial products lend themselves superbly to the transmission of color and the suspension of light for contemplation.

The interaction of the artist and the technologist is increasingly significant in these new forms. For many years industry has been manufacturing plastics to imitate or to substitute for other more familiar materials, such as wood, rubber, ivory, and bone. Now the artists are discovering the inherent beauty of these new materials — highly polished chromed surfaces, sheet acrylic, fiberglass, and cast resins. These marvelous new media lend themselves readily to exploring the nature of light. They range from colorless to almost any known color; they come in fibers, molecular filaments, films, or vacuum formed shapes. Some of these materials are even produced by industry to meet the specific requests of artists.

Totally committed to the present, these artists are already creating a new tradition. Many of them look for discipline in the esthetic ideas formulated almost sixty years ago by the Constructivist movement.

Constructivism evolved along with the de Stijl movement in Holland and Cubism in France. By 1917 in Russia, Naum Gabo had enumerated the basic constructivist principles: the subject of a work of art is the image itself, the work of art is not so much painted or modeled as it is built; and new materials are worthy of being used so long as the nature of these materials is built into the artist's design. Gabo himself used glass and celluloid in early experiments to illustrate his belief that space was as important as mass in sculpture. These early experiments, however, lacked the clarity and purity of the new materials that are now available in contemporary technology.

Today, some artists' ideas lead them into a search for new materials to use beyond those which the industrial producers believe possible, and this straining at the limitations of available materials already indic-

ates new growth exceeding the older principles of Constructivism. The effect of "minimal art," with its emphasis on the superiority of concept over execution, is often apparent. The finished work seems to stand as an entity in itself, apart from the artist's idea. Sometimes it appears detached from the personality of the creative mind. This detachment does not always mean, however, that the artist is impersonal or inhumane; rather, it is the "reflection" of some deeper sociological need. The artist tends to avoid too close an involvement with man's primeval conflicts and spends his energy on those constructive elements of the environment which are subject to his creative powers.

The sculptures of Seena Donneson, Phyllis Mark, Ronnie Reder, and the paintings on metal with mylar collage by Dorothy Gillespie, composed as they are of the abstract language of form, have become a way to explore an internal life of feeling. In this way, their forms mirror an emotional reality. The problems addressed in these works concern the question of illusion. In brief, they wish to create an object that has a powerful physical presence but is, at the same time, inwardly turned, seeming capable of intense self-absorption.

Works composed of mirrored elements achieve this kind of dualism primarily through the reflective finish of their surfaces. These surfaces act to emphasize the actual density and weight of the underlying structure. At the same time, they make the physical bulk of the works of art withdraw behind a screen of reflections.

Under certain light conditions and from certain angles this reflectivity picks up the environment of the works. Paintings and sculptures seem almost to disappear; all that remains is the network of lines that indicates the interior faces of the forms. From other angles, the surfaces reflect into one another and cause geometrics to appear which are not part of the physical format of the works. Although these internal reflections are illusions, they prefigure the actual shape the crystalline forms will appear to have when viewed from another angle. In this way the reflected illusions seem to be the works' **anima** (their total being) generated from within the shifting depth of the mirror.

In this exhibition old divisions between painter and sculptor are narrowed to a minimum. The painter now uses more dimensional surfaces; the sculptor finds a whole new vocabulary for color, both on the surface and deep within her forms. The works of Donneson, Gillespie, Mark and Reder seem to be creating relationships which are seemingly very simple yet, at the same time, are beyond the viewer's grasp. It seems as though an inexplicable coherence works inside their pieces to generate external aspects of their physical being which are always unexpected because they are unpredictable.

GEORGE S. BOLGE

Director

Fort Lauderdale Museum of the Arts